

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Marcus Goodman, ) C/A No. 8:10-2160-HMH-BHH  
vs. )  
Plaintiff, )  
 )  
Trinity Food Service, Food Providers at LCDC, and ) Report and Recommendation  
James Metts, In Charge of LCDC, and ) (partial summary dismissal)  
Lexington County Detention Center, )  
 )  
Defendants. )

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This is a civil action filed *pro se* by a local detention center inmate.<sup>1</sup> Plaintiff is currently incarcerated at the Lexington County Detention Center. He claims that he was given food poisoning by some food served to detention center inmates in April 2010 and that he was not provided with adequate medical care and other inmate safety necessities thereafter. In his initial Complaint, he named two Defendants: Metts and Trinity Food Service. In response to a proper-  
form Order (Entry 8), he submitted service documents and another document asking to make “Lexington County Detention Center” a party Defendant. The Clerk of Court docketed this other document as an “Amended Complaint” and added the party as requested. (Entry 12). Because the allegations in the original Complaint and in the Amended Complaint fail to state a viable federal claim against the detention center, the case should now be partially summarily dismissed as to Lexington County Detention Center.

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review has been made of Plaintiff’s *pro se* Complaint filed in this case. This review has been conducted pursuant to the

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §636(b)(1), and D.S.C. Civ. R. 73.02(B)(2)(e), this magistrate judge is authorized to review all pretrial matters in such *pro se* cases and to submit findings and recommendations to the District Court. See 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e); 1915A (as soon as possible after docketing, district courts should review prisoner cases to determine whether they are subject to summary dismissal).

procedural provisions of 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915, 1915A, and the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1996, and in light of the following precedents: *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-25 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); *Nasim v. Warden, Md. House of Corr.*, 64 F.3d 951 (4th Cir. 1995)(*en banc*); *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983); *Boyce v. Alizaduh*, 595 F.2d 948 (4th Cir. 1979).

*Pro se* complaints are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys, *Gordon v. Leeke*, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978), and a federal district court is charged with liberally construing a complaint filed by a *pro se* litigant to allow the development of a potentially meritorious case. *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89 (2007); *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 5, 9-10 (1980); *Cruz v. Beto*, 405 U.S. 319 (1972). When a federal court is evaluating a *pro se* complaint, the plaintiff's allegations are assumed to be true. *Fine v. City of N. Y.*, 529 F.2d 70, 74 (2d Cir. 1975). Nevertheless, the requirement of liberal construction does not mean that this Court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Dep't of Social Servs.*, 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990). Even under this less stringent standard, however, the Amended Complaint filed in this case is subject to partial summary dismissal as to Lexington County Detention Center under the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

In order to state a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983,<sup>2</sup> an aggrieved party must sufficiently allege that he or she was injured by “the deprivation of any [of his or her] rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the [United States] Constitution and laws” by a “person” acting “under color of state law.” See 42 U.S.C. § 1983; *Monroe v. Page*, 365 U.S. 167 (1961);

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<sup>2</sup> Section 1983 is the procedural mechanism through which Congress provided a private civil cause of action based on allegations of federal constitutional violations by persons acting under color of state law. *Jennings v. Davis*, 476 F.2d 1271 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1973). The purpose of § 1983 is to deter state actors from using badge of their authority to deprive individuals of their *federally guaranteed* rights and to provide relief to victims if such deterrence fails. *McKnight v. Rees*, 88 F.3d 417(6th Cir. 1996)(emphasis added).

see generally 5 Charles Alan Wright & Arthur R. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure* § 1230 (2002). It is well settled that only “persons” may act under color of state law, therefore, a defendant in a § 1983 action must qualify as a “person.” For example, several courts have held that inanimate objects such as buildings, facilities, and grounds do not act under color of state law. See *Allison v. California Adult Auth.*, 419 F.2d 822, 823 (9th Cir. 1969)(California Adult Authority and San Quentin Prison not “person[s]” subject to suit under 42 U.S.C. § 1983); *Preval v. Reno*, 57 F. Supp.2d 307, 310 (E.D. Va. 1999)(“[T]he Piedmont Regional Jail is not a ‘person,’ and therefore not amenable to suit under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.”); *Brooks v. Pembroke City Jail*, 722 F. Supp. 1294, 1301(E.D.N.C. 1989)(“Claims under § 1983 are directed at ‘persons’ and the jail is not a person amenable to suit.”). Additionally, use of the term “staff” or the equivalent as a name for alleged defendants, without the naming of specific staff members, is not adequate to state a claim against a “person” as required in section 1983 actions. See *Barnes v. Baskerville Corr. Cen. Med. Staff*, No. 3:07CV195, 2008 WL 2564779 (E.D. Va. June 25, 2008); *Martin v. UConn Health Care*, No. 3:99CV2158 (DJS), 2000 WL 303262, \*1 (D. Conn. Feb. 09, 2000); *Ferguson v. Morgan*, No. 90 Civ. 6318, 1991 WL 115759 (S.D.N.Y. June 20, 1991).

The Lexington County Detention Center is a building or a group of buildings. It is not a “person” that can act on behalf of the state. As a result, Plaintiff cannot state a viable § 1983 claim against the detention center. Since no other form of federal subject matter jurisdiction appears to be applicable to Plaintiff’s claims, the center should not have been added as a defendant in this case as no viable claim is stated against it.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Accordingly, it is recommended that the District Court partially dismiss the Amended Complaint in this case *without prejudice* and without issuance and service of process as to Lexington County Detention Center only. See *Denton v. Hernandez*; *Neitzke v. Williams*; *Haines v. Kerner*; *Brown v. Briscoe*, 998 F.2d 201, 202-04 (4th Cir. 1993); *Boyce v. Alizaduh*; *Todd v.*

*Baskerville*, 712 F.2d at 74; see also 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B); 28 U.S.C. § 1915A (as soon as possible after docketing, district courts should review prisoner cases to determine whether they are subject to summary dismissal). The Amended Complaint should be served on the remaining two Defendants.

Plaintiff's attention is directed to the important notice on the next page.

s/Bruce Howe Hendricks  
United States Magistrate Judge

October 5, 2010  
Greenville, South Carolina